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Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012

# A profile of persons with disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years or older, 2012

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. not available for any reference period
.. not available for a specific reference period
... not applicable
0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
$0^s$ value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
$^p$ preliminary
$^r$ revised
x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
$^E$ use with caution
F too unreliable to be published
* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

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## Highlights

- According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older reported having a disability that limited them in their daily activities—an estimated 3.8 million people.

- The prevalence of disability varied by province from 10% in Quebec to 19% in Nova Scotia. In the territories, the prevalence was 14% in Yukon, 8% in the Northwest Territories, and 7% in Nunavut.

- The prevalence of disability increased with advancing age. The average age of onset was the early 40s. About 13% of persons with disabilities who were of working age (15 to 64 years) reported that their disability existed at birth.

- Women (15%) reported a higher prevalence of disability than did men (13%).

- About a quarter of persons with disabilities were classified as having a very severe disability.

- Disabilities related to pain (10%), flexibility (8%), and mobility (7%) were the most prevalent. Most persons with disabilities (76%) had more than one disability.

- While 31% of Canadians aged 25 to 64 years without disabilities had a university degree at the bachelor's level or higher, the figure among those with disabilities was 16%. The percentage with a university degree decreased as the severity of the disability increased. Just under half of 25- to 64-year-olds whose disabilities existed before they completed school reported that the condition influenced their choice of courses and career and 30% indicated that it took them longer to achieve their present level of education.

- Close to half (47%) of 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities reported that they were employed, compared with 74% of those without disabilities. More persons with disabilities (45%) were not in the labour force compared to those without disabilities (21%). A quarter (27%) of persons with disabilities who were employed indicated that their employer was not aware of their work limitation. Among the working-age population with disabilities, 24% required modified hours or days or reduced work hours.

- In 2010, the self-reported median total income of persons aged 15 to 64 years with disabilities was just over $20,000, compared with just over $30,000 for those without disabilities. For 37% of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years, non-employment income (pensions, lump-sum payments or investment income) was their only source of income.

- More than 80% of persons with disabilities reported using at least one aid or assistive device, and 27% needed at least one aid that they did not have. A slightly higher percentage of women than men (83% versus 80%) used at least one aid or assistive device. The prevalence of unmet needs for aids varied by age, peaking at 30% among 45- to 64-year-olds. Cost was the most commonly reported reason for unmet needs for aids or assistive devices.

- Three-quarters (76%) of persons with disabilities reported taking a prescription medication at least once a week.

- Help with heavy household chores was the assistance most commonly received by persons with disabilities (49%). Family members were the most commonly reported source of help.

- Public transit was used by 20% of persons with disabilities; 8% reported using specialized transit. While the majority reported no difficulty using public or specialized transit, this depended on the severity of disability—the prevalence of experiencing "a lot" of difficulty increased from 3%[E] of those with mild disabilities to 29% of those with very severe disabilities.

# Introduction

In March 2010, the Government of Canada ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD provides a framework for governments to address the exclusion and lack of access that persons with disabilities encounter. The CRPD requires the Government to act and monitor progress in creating a more inclusive and accessible society. Under the Convention, the Government is responsible for collecting data and reporting statistics on disability.

Canada has collected data on disability for more than 30 years via a number of surveys. Over the 1983- to-2006 period, three successive surveys collected data related to disability: the Canadian Health and Disability Survey, the Health and Activity Limitation Survey, and the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey. As part of the New Disability Data Strategy launched by Employment and Social Development Canada, the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD), Statistics Canada's new source of data on disability, aims to provide frequent, accessible, and timely information.

Based on data from the 2012 CSD, this report presents a profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years or older and includes socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, education, employment and income, and disability characteristics, such as severity of disability, the use of aids and assistive devices, barriers to transportation, and help needed with everyday activities. This report is intended to be a resource for non-government organizations supporting persons with disabilities, disability and social policy analysts, researchers, governments, and the general public.

This report presents a profile of persons with disabilities, based on data from the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). The CSD provides estimates by type of disability, information on supports for persons with disabilities, and on their employment, income and participation in society. The survey was funded by Employment and Social Development Canada and conducted by Statistics Canada in the fall of 2012.

The survey population comprised all Canadians aged 15 years or older as of May 10, 2011, who were living in private dwellings. Because the institutionalized population was excluded, the data, particularly for older age groups, should be interpreted accordingly.

The CSD used the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health framework. This framework defines disability as the relationship between body function and structure, daily activities and social participation, while recognizing the role of environmental factors (WHO, 2001). In keeping with this definition, the CSD targeted respondents who not only have difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem, **but also experience a limitation in their daily activities**. The CSD definition includes not only people who reported being "sometimes," "often" or "always" limited in their daily activities due to a long-term condition or health problem, but also those who reported being "rarely" limited if they were also unable to do certain tasks or could do them only with a lot of difficulty.

The CSD incorporates important changes from the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) in methodology and in the way that disability is defined. As a result, comparisons cannot be made between PALS and CSD data. Details on these changes are available in the *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012: Concepts and Methods Guide*. Appendix A contains a summary of changes in the definition of disability and overall methodology.

# 1. Prevalence of disability

## One in seven Canadians aged 15 years or older reported a disability

In 2012,[1] almost 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older—3.8 million individuals—reported having a disability that limited their daily activities.

The prevalence of disability varied across the provinces and territories (Table 1). Among the provinces, the prevalence ranged from 10% in Quebec to 19% in Nova Scotia. In general, provinces in the east had a slightly higher prevalence of disability than did those in the west. Among the territories, the prevalence of disability was 14% in Yukon, 8% in the Northwest Territories, and 7% in Nunavut.

Table 1
Number and percentage with and without disabilities, aged 15 years or older, Canada, provinces and territories, 2012

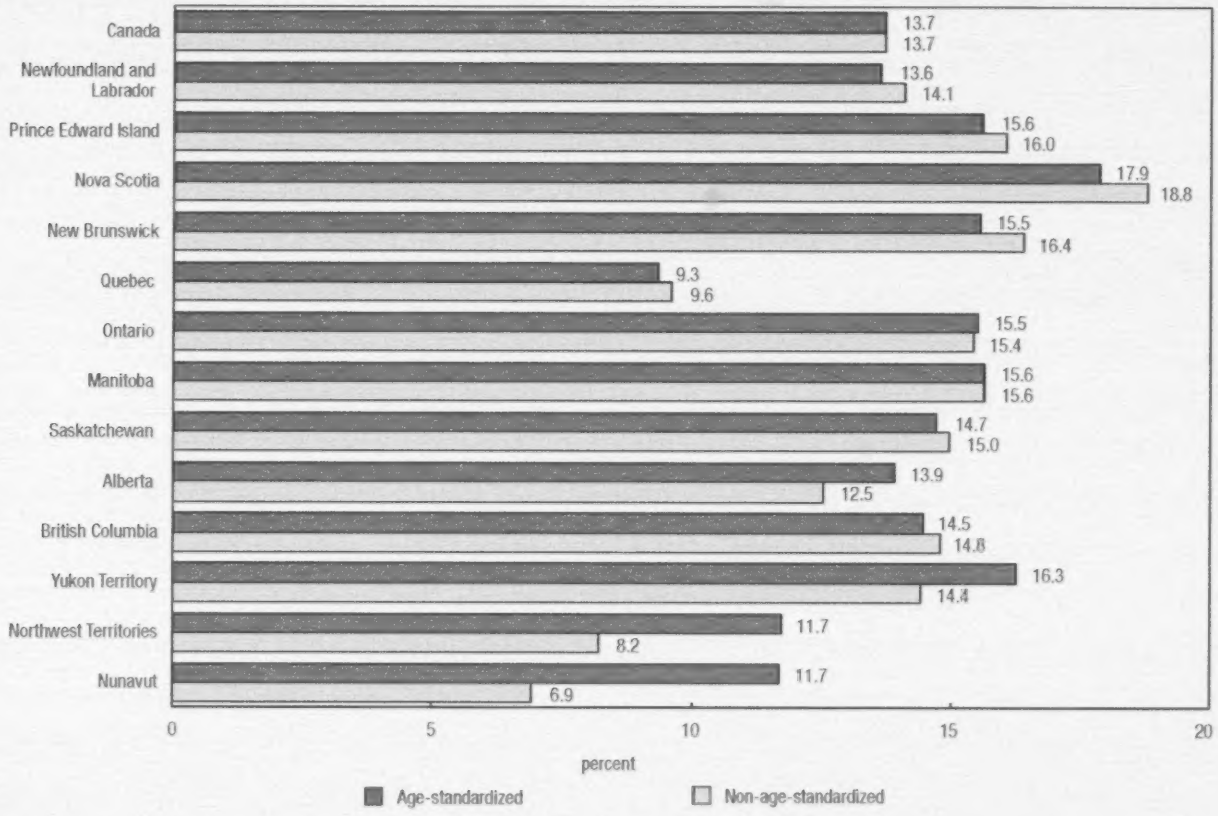
| Canada, provinces and territories | Population | Persons with disabilities | Persons without disabilities | Prevalence of disability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | number | | percent |
| **Canada** | **27,516,200** | **3,775,910** | **23,740,290** | **13.7** |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 420,970 | 59,300 | 361,670 | 14.1 |
| Prince Edward Island | 117,440 | 18,840 | 98,600 | 16.0 |
| Nova Scotia | 765,100 | 143,760 | 621,340 | 18.8 |
| New Brunswick | 606,820 | 99,450 | 507,380 | 16.4 |
| Quebec | 6,436,930 | 616,740 | 5,820,190 | 9.6 |
| Ontario | 10,727,900 | 1,651,620 | 9,076,280 | 15.4 |
| Manitoba | 929,650 | 145,270 | 784,380 | 15.6 |
| Saskatchewan | 779,150 | 116,640 | 662,520 | 15.0 |
| Alberta | 2,945,140 | 369,190 | 2,575,950 | 12.5 |
| British Columbia | 3,703,010 | 546,760 | 3,156,250 | 14.8 |
| Yukon | 28,360 | 4,070 | 24,290 | 14.4 |
| Northwest Territories | 33,370 | 2,740 | 30,630 | 8.2 |
| Nunavut | 22,350 | 1,540 | 20,810 | 6.9 |

**Note:** The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

Differences in the prevalence of disability across the provinces and territories may, in part, reflect varying age compositions. For example, the populations in Alberta and the three territories are relatively young. Consequently, the provincial and territorial prevalence rates were age-standardized[2] to the Canadian population. In Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Yukon the prevalence of disability remained above the national figure, and the prevalence in Quebec, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut remained below the national figure (Chart 1). However, as a result of age-standardization, the prevalence of disability dropped to the national level in Newfoundland and Labrador, and rose to the national level in Alberta. Despite age-standardization, prevalence remained lowest in Quebec (9%) and highest in Nova Scotia (18%).

1. Owing to the sampling design of the CSD, some data about persons with disabilities were initially collected through the National Household Survey (NHS) with a reference date of May 10, 2011; other data on the CSD questionnaire were collected later in the fall of 2012. In this sense, the CSD is a "follow-up" survey—persons with disabilities reported an activity limitation on the NHS in May, 2011, and a disability on the CSD in the fall of 2012. Thus, CSD data about persons with disabilities pertain to 2012 information about a population defined in 2011.
2. For populations with different age compositions (persons with disabilities tend to be older than persons without disabilities), age-standardization allows more meaningful comparisons by adjusting for differences in the age distributions. In the CSD, the age distribution of persons with disabilities is adjusted to match to the age composition of the Canadian population, using the following age groups: 15 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, 45 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years, and 75 years or older.

**Chart 1**
**Age-standardized and non-age-standardized prevalence of disability, aged 15 years or older, Canada, provinces and territories, 2012**




**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Prevalence rises with age

The prevalence of disability rose from 4% among 15- to 24-year-olds to 43% for persons aged 75 years or older (Table 2). One in 10 people of working age (15 to 64 years) reported having a disability; among the senior population (65 years or older), the figure was 33%.

Table 2
**Prevalence of disability, by age group, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**

| Age group | Population | Persons with disabilities | Persons without disabilities | Prevalence of disability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | number | | percent |
| **Total-aged 15 or older** | **27,516,200** | **3,775,910** | **23,740,290** | **13.7** |
| **15 to 64 years** | **23,187,350** | **2,338,240** | **20,849,110** | **10.1** |
| 15 to 24 years | 4,462,850 | 195,720 | 4,267,130 | 4.4 |
| 25 to 44 years | 9,159,860 | 598,680 | 8,561,180 | 6.5 |
| 45 to 64 years | 9,564,640 | 1,543,840 | 8,020,800 | 16.1 |
| **65 years or older** | **4,328,850** | **1,437,670** | **2,891,180** | **33.2** |
| 65 to 74 years | 2,486,790 | 653,900 | 1,832,880 | 26.3 |
| 75 years or older | 1,842,070 | 783,770 | 1,058,300 | 42.5 |

**Note:** The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

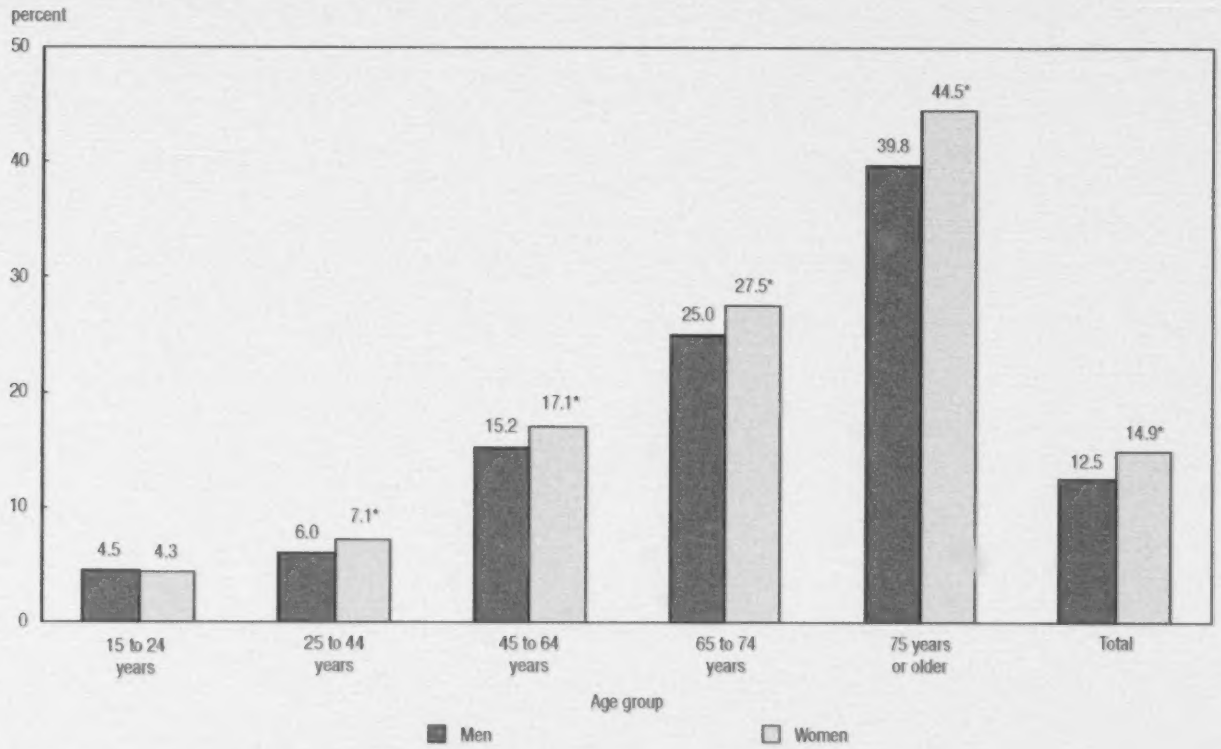
## Average age of onset in early 40s

The average age at which persons with disabilities started to have difficulty associated with their main condition was 43. Men reported an earlier age of onset than did women: 41.5 years versus 44.5 years. About half of seniors (65 years or older) with disabilities reported that they began having difficulties or activity limitations before age 65. Around 13% of those of working age (15 to 64 years) reported that their disability existed at birth.

## Women report higher prevalence

Women (15%) were generally more likely than men (13%) to report disabilities. The exception was the 15 to 24 years age group, among whom the prevalence did not differ significantly between men and women (Chart 2). For both sexes, the prevalence of disability increased with age.

Chart 2
**Prevalence of disability, by age group and sex, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**




* significantly different from men ($p < 0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Over 1 in 4 "very severe" disability

A global severity score was developed for the CSD (see SASD, 2014a for details). The score was calculated by taking into account the number of disability types, the level of difficulty, and the frequency of the activity limitation. To make the severity score easier to use, four severity classes were established: mild, moderate, severe, and very severe. Of the 3.8 million Canadians aged 15 years or older who reported a disability, 32% were classified as having a mild disability; 20%, a moderate disability; 23%, a severe disability; and 26%, a very severe disability (Table 3). The prevalence of severity did not differ significantly between men and women.

Table 3
**Severity of disability, by sex, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2012**

| | Both sexes | | Men | | Women | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Global severity class | number | percent | number | percent | number | percent |
| **Total** | **3,775,910** | **100.0** | **1,699,020** | **100.0** | **2,076,890** | **100.0** |
| Mild | 1,195,590 | 31.7 | 564,410 | 33.2 | 631,180 | 30.4 |
| Moderate | 747,980 | 19.8 | 339,160 | 20.0 | 408,810 | 19.7 |
| Severe | 849,540 | 22.5 | 365,840 | 21.5 | 483,700 | 23.3 |
| Very severe | 982,810 | 26.0 | 429,610 | 25.3 | 553,200 | 26.6 |

**Note:** The sum of the values for each category may differ from the total due to rounding.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

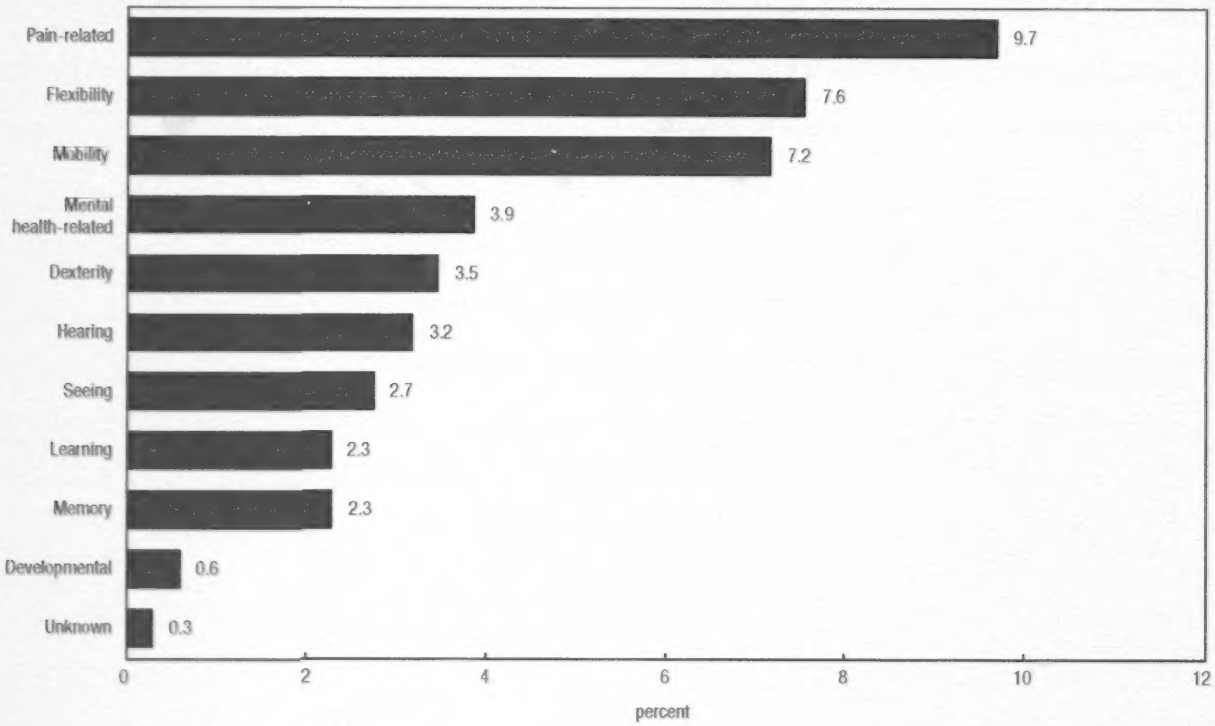
# 2. Types of Disabilities[3]

## Disabilities related to pain, flexibility, and mobility most common

Disabilities related to pain, flexibility, and mobility were the most common. About 12% of Canadians aged 15 years or older (just over 3 million) reported having at least one of these disabilities, and many people reported more than one of them. For example, 66% of those who reported mobility disabilities also reported the other two, and 35% of Canadians with disabilities reported having all three.

Mental health-related[4], dexterity, and hearing disabilities were the next most commonly reported, followed by seeing, learning, and memory disabilities. Fewer than 1% of Canadians aged 15 years or older reported a developmental disability (Chart 3).

Chart 3
**Prevalence of disabilities, by type, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**




**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

3. The Disability Screening Questions (DSQ) assessed the presence of 10 distinct types of disabilities: seeing, hearing, mobility (for example, difficulty walking on flat surface for 15 minutes), flexibility (for example, difficulty bending down and picking up an object), dexterity (for example, difficulty in using hands or fingers), pain-related (for example, recurring episodes of pain), learning (for example, attention problems), developmental (for example, autism), mental health-related (for example, anxiety disorder), and memory (for example, ongoing periods of confusion). An "unknown" type was created for respondents who reported only an "other" type of limitation.
4. Comparisons of the prevalence of mental health-related disabilities between the CSD and other surveys such as the Canadian Community Health Survey are not recommended because of differences in the definitions.

## Most have multiple disabilities

As noted for disabilities related to pain, flexibility, and mobility, disabilities often co-occur. In fact, three out of four adults with disabilities reported more than one type of disability. For example, 65% of individuals who reported pain-related disabilities also reported flexibility disabilities, and 61% reported mobility disabilities (Table 4). Disabilities related to pain co-occurred most frequently, and developmental disabilities co-occurred least frequently.

Table 4
**Co-occurring disabilities, by type, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2012**

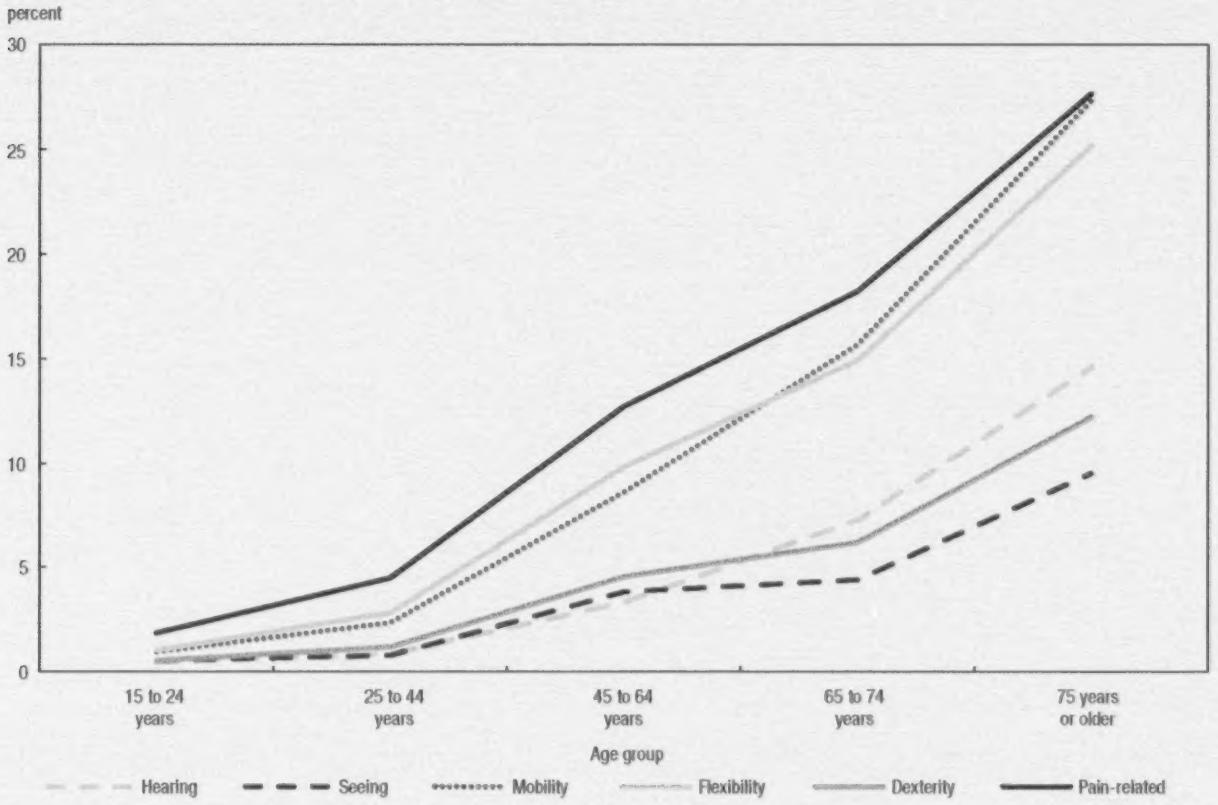
| Type of disability | Pain-related | Flexibility | Mobility | Mental health-related | Dexterity | Hearing | Seeing | Learning | Memory | Developmental |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | percent | | | | | | | | | |
| Pain-related | ... | 64.9 | 61.3 | 30.2 | 30.7 | 22.1 | 21.1 | 17.3 | 18.9 | 2.9 |
| Flexibility | 83.7 | ... | 72.4 | 31.8 | 37.7 | 24.6 | 24.3 | 19.5 | 21.6 | 3.8 |
| Mobility | 82.9 | 76.0 | ... | 29.7 | 36.1 | 24.8 | 24.6 | 18.8 | 21.5 | 3.4 |
| Mental health-related | 75.3 | 61.6 | 54.9 | ... | 34.9 | 24.6 | 27.8 | 38.6 | 35.9 | 8.7 |
| Dexterity | 86.1 | 82.1 | 75.2 | 39.5 | ... | 28.7 | 31.3 | 25.9 | 29.7 | 5.5 |
| Hearing | 67.3 | 58.5 | 56.2 | 30.1 | 31.3 | ... | 30.2 | 21.0 | 26.8 | 4.5[E] |
| Seeing | 74.1 | 66.7 | 64.0 | 39.0 | 39.3 | 34.9 | ... | 28.0 | 30.5 | 6.2[E] |
| Learning | 74.1 | 65.2 | 59.4 | 66.2 | 39.7 | 29.5 | 34.0 | ... | 53.6 | 16.7 |
| Memory | 80.2 | 71.3 | 67.5 | 61.6 | 44.8 | 37.2 | 36.9 | 52.9 | ... | 9.9 |
| Developmental | 49.2 | 48.3 | 41.8 | 57.1 | 32.2 | 24.5[E] | 28.9[E] | 64.2 | 39.0 | ... |

... not applicable
[E] use with caution
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Prevalence of most types increases with age

The prevalence of most types of disabilities increased with age, particularly sensory (seeing and hearing) and physical (pain-related, flexibility, dexterity, and mobility) disabilities. For example, disabilities related to mobility affected fewer than 1% of Canadians aged 15 to 24 years, but 27% of those aged 75 years or older (Chart 4). Although much less pronounced, the prevalence of vision disabilities also increased with age—from fewer than 1% of 15- to 24-year-olds to 10% of people aged 75 years or older.

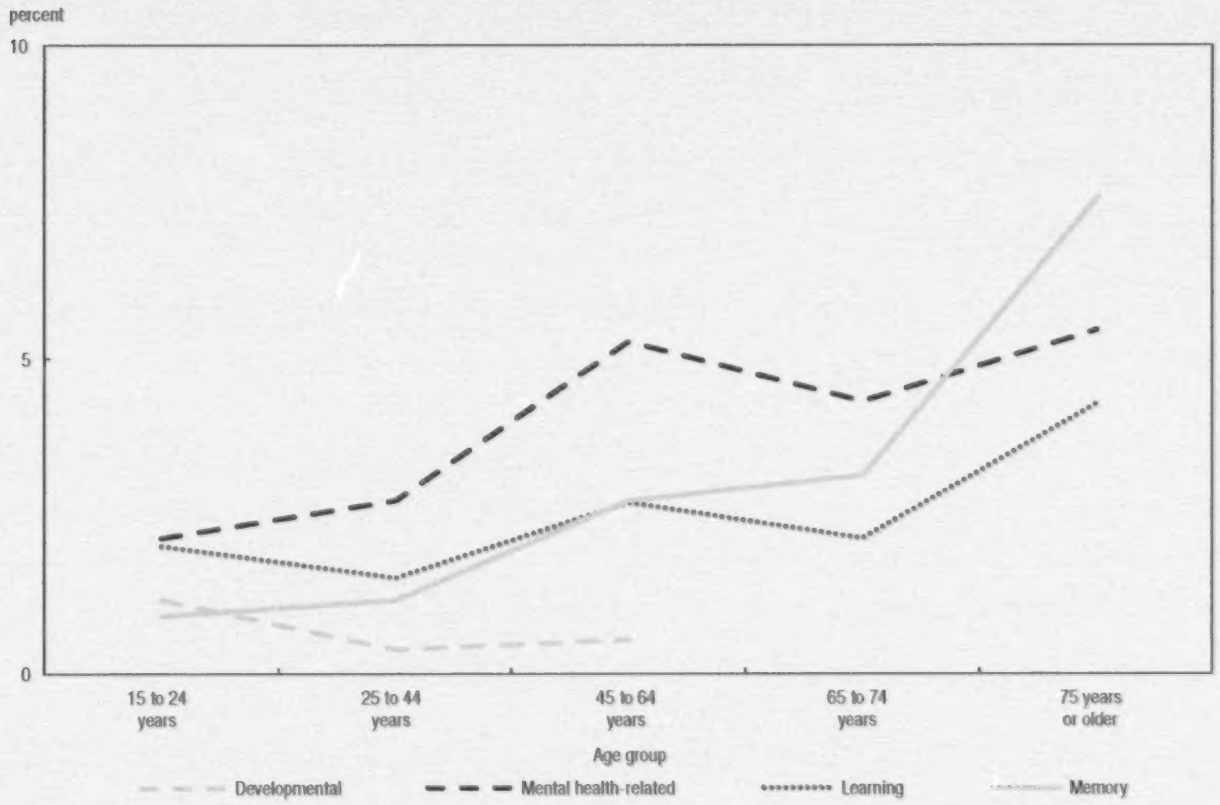
**Chart 4**
**Prevalence of sensory and physical disabilities, by type and age group, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**




**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

Rising prevalence at older ages was not observed for all types of disabilities, notably, those related to mental health (Chart 5). Although the prevalence of learning disabilities was highest among seniors aged 75 years or older, the prevalence of developmental disabilities declined with age. Mental health-related disabilities peaked at 5% at ages 45 to 64 years, and declined to 4% at ages 65 to 74 years. This statistically significant decrease may be due to the exclusion of the institutionalized population from the survey sample, and thus, should be interpreted with caution.

**Chart 5**
**Prevalence of cognitive and mental health-related disabilities, by type and age group, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**

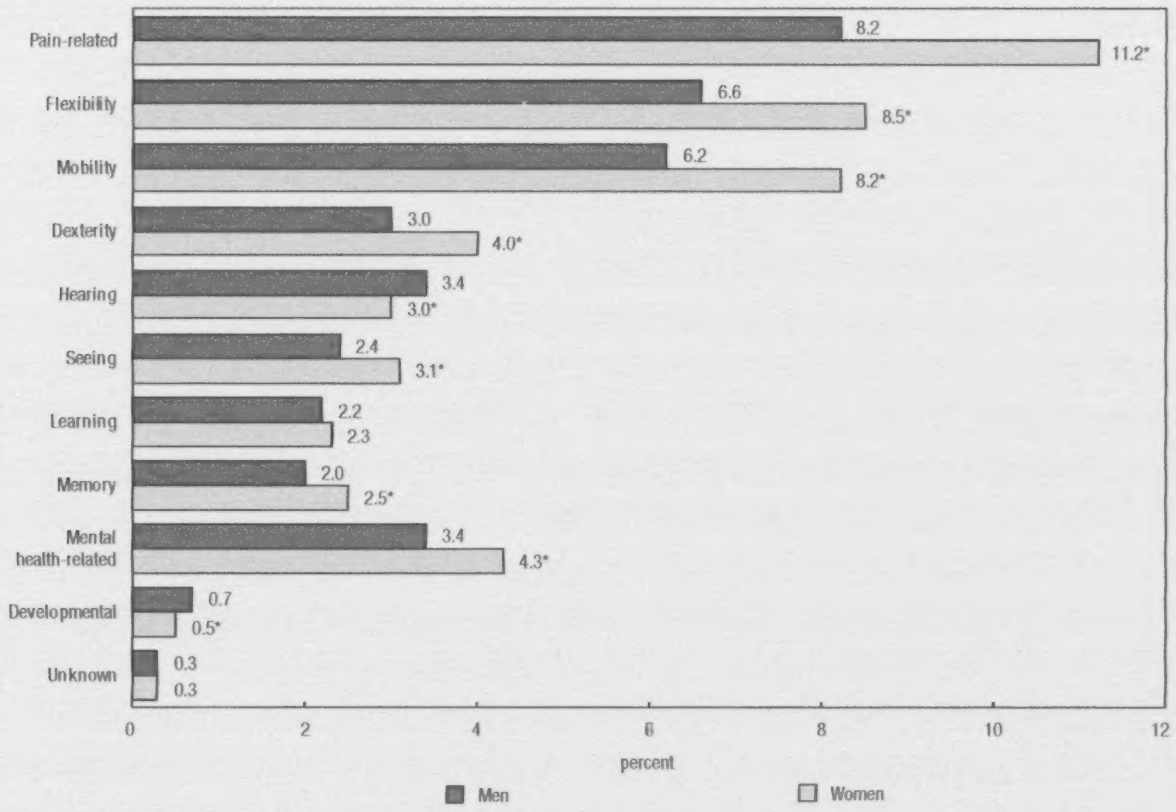



**Note:** For the developmental type of disability, data for the age group 45 to 64 years should be used with caution. For the developmental type of disability, data for the age groups 65 to 74 years and 75 years or older were too unreliable to publish.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Women more likely to experience pain-related, flexibility, and mobility disabilities

In 2012, 13% of women and 10% of men aged 15 or older reported disabilities related to pain, flexibility or mobility. Compared with men, women had a higher prevalence of all types of disabilities, except hearing and developmental disabilities. The prevalence of learning disabilities was similar among men and women (Chart 6).

Chart 6
**Prevalence of disabilities, by type and sex, aged 15 years or older, Canada, 2012**




* significantly different from men ($p < 0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

# 3. Education

In general, persons with disabilities are less likely than those without disabilities to graduate from high school or from university at the bachelor's level or higher (Government of Canada, 2009). However, this may reflect the difference in the age composition of the two groups. The age profile of persons with disabilities is older, and older people are less likely than younger adults to be university graduates. To account for the different age compositions of the two populations, the highest level of educational attainment by disability status was age-standardized.[5]

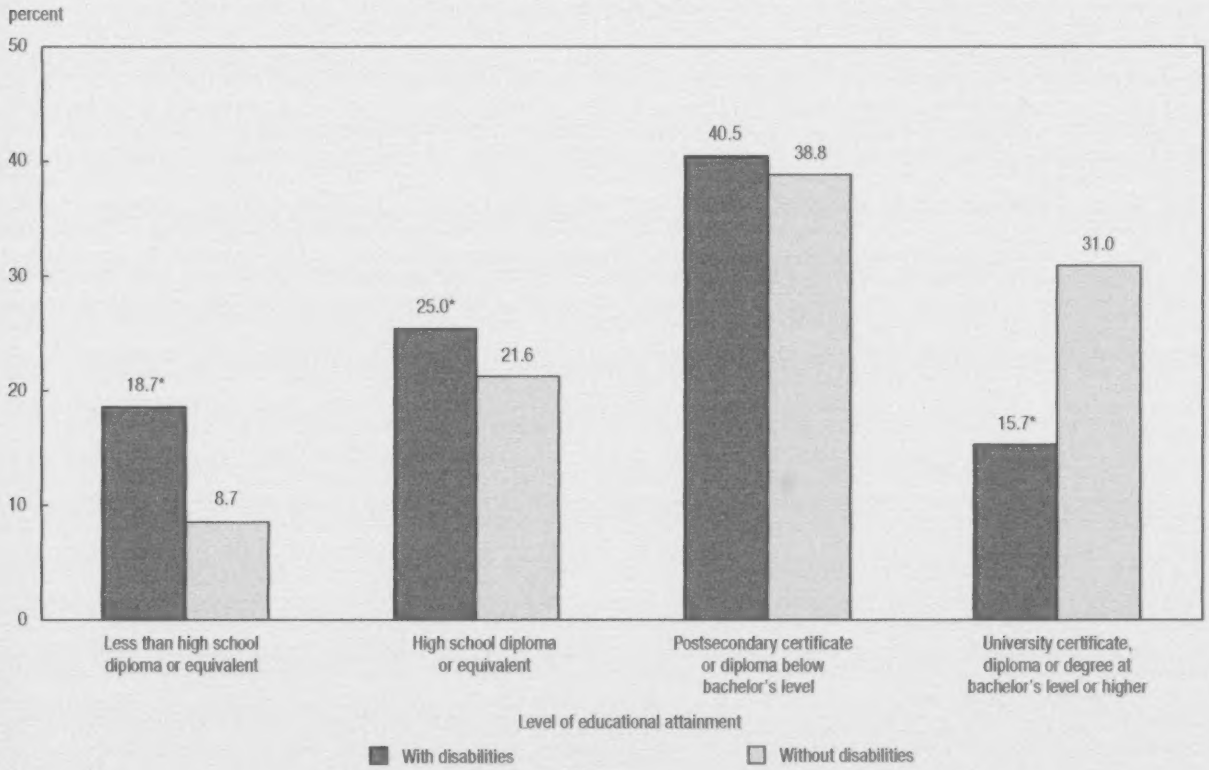
## Less likely to be university graduates

Almost 80% of 25- to 64-year-olds with disabilities had at least a high school diploma; this compared with 90% of those without disabilities. Among persons with disabilities, 19% had less than a high school diploma, compared with 9% of those without disabilities (Chart 7). The difference between the percentages of persons with and without disabilities who had postsecondary education below the bachelor's degree level—41% and 39%, respectively—was not statistically significant. By contrast, the difference between the percentages that had a high school diploma was small but statistically significant—25% and 22%, and the difference between the percentages that had at least a university certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor's level was large: 16% of persons with disabilities versus 31% of persons without disabilities.

5. For education, the 25 to 44 years and 45 to 64 years age groups were used for age standardization. The 15 to 24 years age group was not included because 68% of this population were attending school.

Thus, even when the differences in age composition of the two populations were taken into account, persons with disabilities were less likely than persons without disabilities to be high school or university graduates.

Chart 7
**Age-standardized highest level of educational attainment, by disability status, aged 25 to 64 years, Canada, 2011**



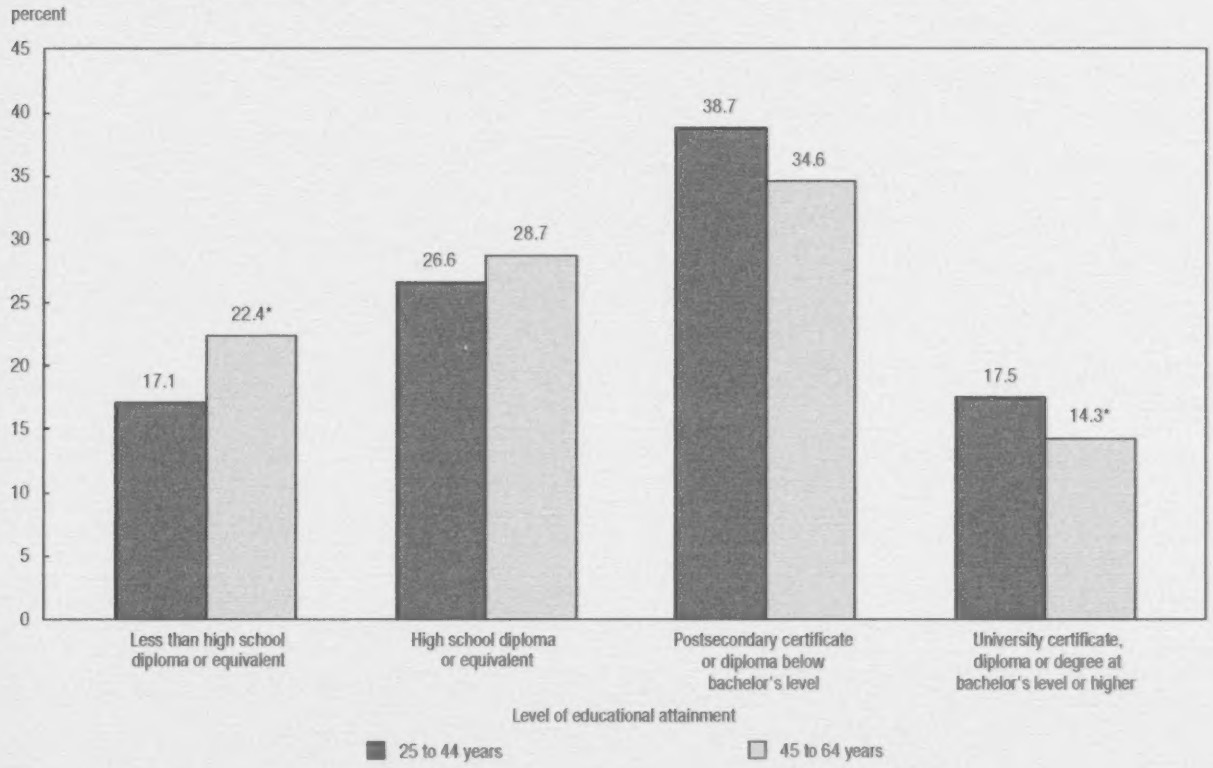

* significantly different from persons without disabilities ($p < 0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Attainment varies with age

Among 25- to 44-year-olds with disabilities, 83% had completed at least a high school diploma (including 27% whose highest level of educational attainment was high school graduation) (Chart 8). At ages 45 to 64 years, 78% had obtained at least a high school diploma (including 29% whose highest level was high school graduation).

The difference between the percentages of 25- to 44-year-olds and 45- to 64-year-olds with disabilities who had postsecondary education below the bachelor's level was not statistically significant. Regardless of age group, relatively few persons with disabilities were university graduates, although the percentage was significantly higher at ages 25 to 44 years.

Chart 8
**Highest level of educational attainment, by age group, aged 25 to 64 years with disabilities, Canada, 2012**




* significantly different from the younger age group ($p < 0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

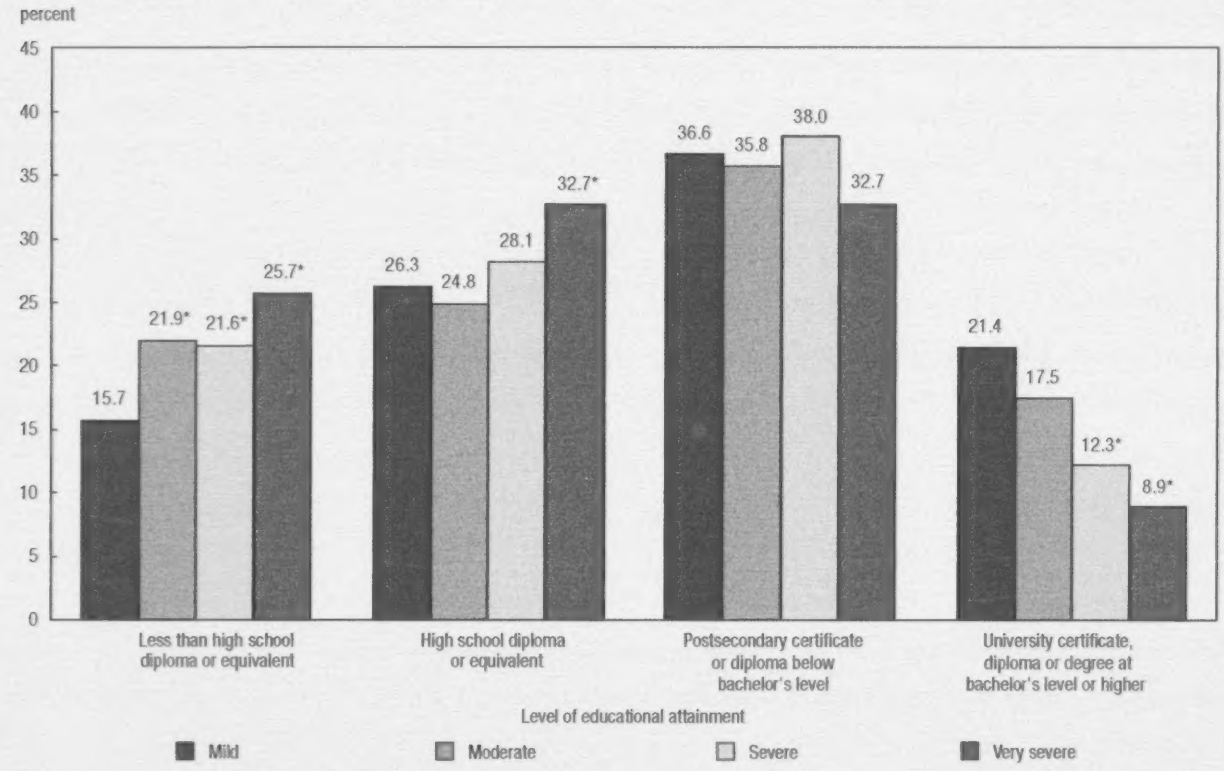
## No difference in attainment between men and women aged 25 to 64

At ages 25 to 64 years, men and women with disabilities were equally likely to report having less than high school graduation, a high school diploma, a postsecondary certificate below the bachelor's level, and university graduation. For example, 23% of men and 20% of women with disabilities had not graduated from high school. The corresponding figures for postsecondary certificates were 35% for men and 37% for women, and for university graduation, 15% and 16%.

## Percentage of university graduates declines as severity of disability increases

The global severity class of disability was associated with educational attainment (Chart 9). For example, persons with severe disabilities were more likely than those with mild disabilities to have less than a high school diploma: 22% versus 16%. On the other hand, while 12% of persons with severe disabilities were university graduates, the figure was 21% among those with mild disabilities.

Chart 9
**Highest level of educational attainment, by global severity class, aged 25 to 64 years with disabilities, Canada, 2012**




* significantly different from persons with mild disabilities ($p < 0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

Among persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years, 8% had attended school in the past five years. Most of them—85%—reported having their condition while attending school. Fewer than a quarter (23%) of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 64 years who had their condition while attending school had needed assistive devices, support services, modification to curriculum or additional time for testing; 7%[E] reported that they required adapted/modified building features to attend school.

## Choice of courses and careers influenced by condition

Just under half (45%) of 25- to 64-year-olds with disabilities whose condition existed prior to school completion reported that the condition influenced their choice of courses and careers. A third (34%) reported that they took fewer courses/subjects; 30% reported that it took them longer to achieve their present level of education; 30% discontinued their studies; and 23% reported that their education was interrupted for long periods. About 40% indicated that people avoided or excluded them at school, and 27% experienced bullying.

# 4. Employment

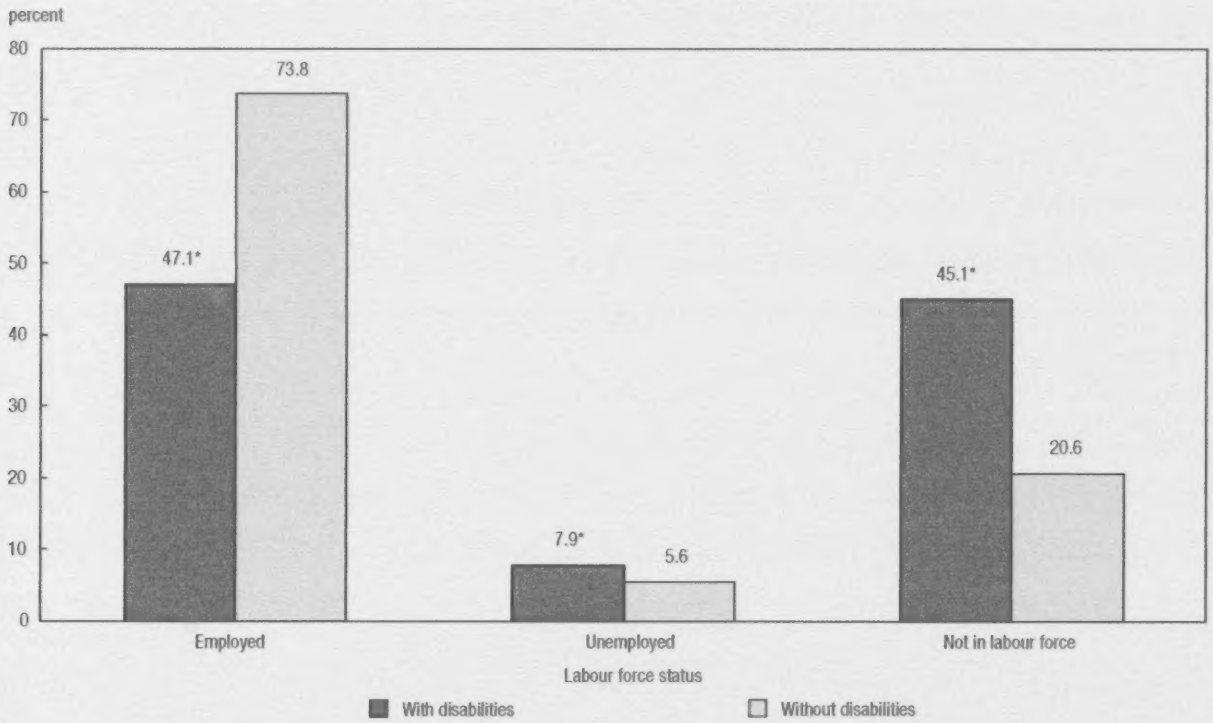
Persons with disabilities often face more challenges in the labour force than do persons without disabilities (SASD, 2008). However, this could reflect a difference in the age composition of the two groups, as the population with disabilities is older, and older adults are less likely than younger adults to be employed. To account for the different age compositions of the two populations, the labour force data by disability status were age-standardized.[6]

6. For employment, 15 to 24 years, 25 to 44 years, and 45 to 64 years were used for age standardization.

## Half of working-age adults with disabilities employed

Close to half (47%) of 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities reported that they were employed; the figure for their contemporaries without disabilities was 74% (Chart 10). Compared with persons without disabilities, those with disabilities were significantly more likely to be unemployed (8% versus 6%) or not in the labour force (45% versus 21%).

**Chart 10**
**Age-standardized labour force status, by disability status, aged 15 to 64 years, Canada, 2011**




* significantly different from persons without disabilities ($p < 0.05$)
**Note:** Not in labour force includes those who were retired.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

A third (32%) of 15- to 24-year-olds with disabilities reported that they were employed; at ages 25 to 44 years, the percentage was 55%, and at ages 45 to 64 years, 46% (Table 5). Persons with disabilities aged 15 to 24 years and 25 to 44 years were equally likely to report being unemployed (11% and 10%), but those aged 45 to 64 years were significantly less likely to report being unemployed (4%). The percentages not in the labour force differed significantly by age group—35% at ages 25 to 44 years,[7] compared with 50% at ages 45 to 64 years.

7. Of persons aged 25 to 44 years with disabilities who were not in the labour force, 6.3% were attending school.

Table 5
**Labour force status, by age group, aged 15 to 64 years with disabilities, Canada, 2011**

| | Age group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 15 to 24 years | 25 to 44 years | 45 to 64 years |
| Labour force status | | percent | |
| Employed | 32.2 | 55.4 | 46.0 |
| Unemployed | 11.2 | 10.0[E] | 4.3 |
| Not in labour force | 56.5 | 34.6 | 49.7 |

[E] use with caution
**Note:** 15 to 24 age group includes those in school.
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

The labour force status of men and women with disabilities did not differ significantly. The percentages who reported that they were employed were 50% among men and 45% among women. Men and women were equally likely to report being unemployed (6% for both sexes) or that they were not in the labour force (44% and 49%).

## Two-thirds with mild disabilities employed

The labour force status of 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities differed significantly by global severity class; specifically, the percentage employed decreased as the global severity class increased (Table 6). For instance, while 65% of those with moderate disabilities stated that they were employed, this was the case for 41% of those with severe disabilities and 26% of those with very severe disabilities. The percentages unemployed did not differ significantly by global severity, but the percentage not in the labour force generally rose as the global severity class increased. For instance, 29% of persons with mild disabilities reported that they were not in the labour force; the comparable figure for those with very severe disabilities was 68%.

Table 6
**Labour force status, by global severity class, aged 15 to 64 years with disabilities, Canada, 2011**

| | Employed | Unemployed | Not in labour force |
|---|---|---|---|
| Global severity class | | percent | |
| Mild | 65.0 | 6.5 | 28.5 |
| Moderate | 52.9 | 5.7 | 41.4 |
| Severe | 41.2 | 6.5[E] | 52.3 |
| Very severe | 25.9 | 6.4[E] | 67.7 |

[E] use with caution
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Employers not aware of limitation of 1 in 4 workers with disabilities

A quarter (27%) of workers with disabilities indicated that their employer was not aware of their limitation. Among those with current or recent[8] labour force experience, 43% considered themselves to be disadvantaged in employment because of their condition, and 44% felt that their current employer would be likely to consider them disadvantaged in employment because of their condition.

## A quarter require modified schedule or reduced hours

Among persons with disabilities who were employed or unemployed in the fall of 2012, 43% reported needing a work accommodation to be able to work: 24% needed a modified schedule or reduced work hours; 17% required a special chair or back support; and 15% required a job redesign (modified or different duties).

8. Labour force experience within previous five years.

# 5. Income

This section presents information on self-reported total income[9] during the calendar year 2010 from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).

## Median total income of persons with disabilities $10,000 less than median for those without disabilities

In 2010, the self-reported median total income of 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities was $20,420, compared with $31,160 for those without disabilities. For seniors (65 years or older), the corresponding amounts were $21,450 and $24,920. The less pronounced difference at age 65 years or older is likely due to income support programs aimed at seniors, as well as many seniors having developed a disability recently, which had less impact on their pension contributions and savings.

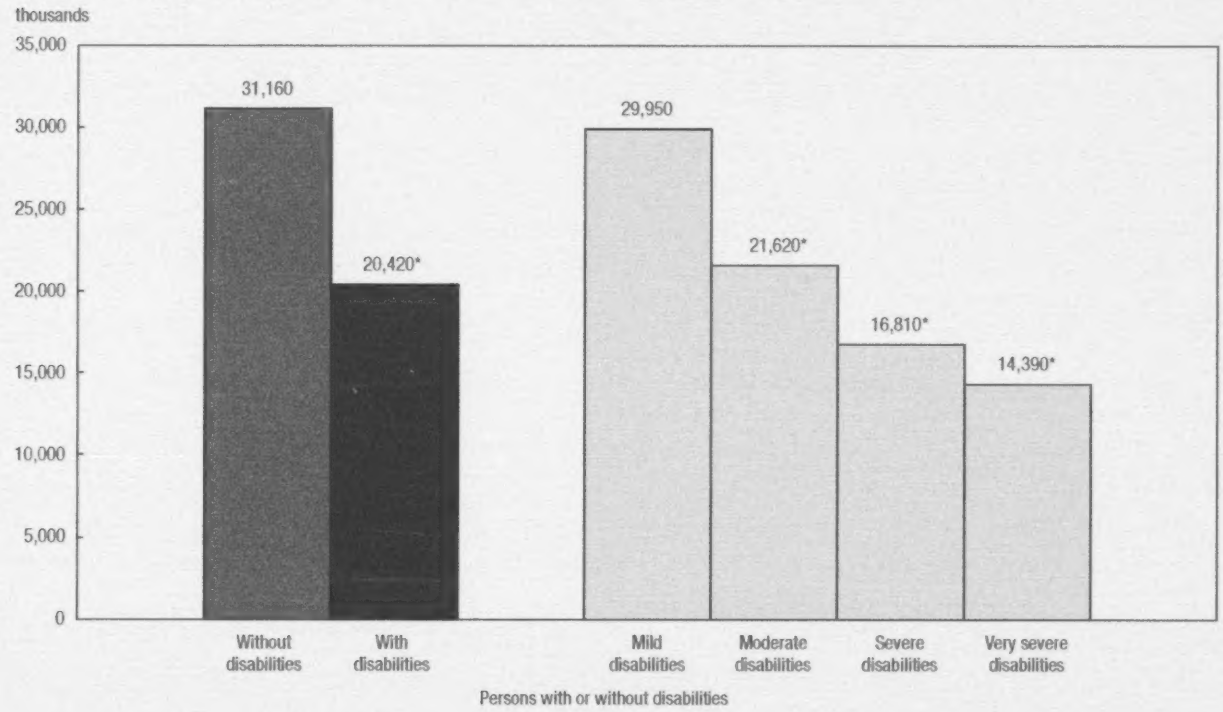
The self-reported median total income of 15- to 24-year-olds with disabilities was $4,740, which was 69% of that reported by their contemporaries without disabilities ($6,870). At ages 25 to 64 years, the gap widened. Persons with disabilities aged 25 to 44 years reported $21,480—57% of the amount reported by those without disabilities ($37,560); at ages 45 to 64 years, the median for persons with disabilities was $22,890—56% of the median for those without disabilities ($40,910). Among seniors, amounts were lower, but the gap was narrower. The median total income of persons aged 65 to 74 years with disabilities was $22,290, which was 87% of what 65- to 74-year-olds without disabilities reported ($26,170). The difference almost disappeared at age 75 years or older: $21,070 versus $22,920.

Regardless of age, men with disabilities reported significantly higher median total incomes than did women with disabilities.

Among 15- to 64-year-olds with disabilities, self-reported median total income decreased sharply at higher levels of global severity (Chart 11). The median for persons with mild disabilities was $29,950; the median were $21,620 for those with moderate disabilities, $16,810 for those with severe disabilities, and $14,390 for those with very severe disabilities.

9. This includes: wages and salaries (total); net farm self-employment income; net income from unincorporated non-farm business and/or professional practice; child benefits; Old Age Security pension and Guaranteed Income Supplement; benefits from Canada or Quebec Pension Plan; Employment Insurance benefits; other income from government sources; dividends and interest on bonds, deposits, savings certificates and other investment income; retirement pensions, superannuation and annuities, including those from Registered Retirement Savings Plans and Registered Retired Income Funds; other money income. Net capital gains and losses are not included.

Chart 11
**Median total income, by disability status and global severity class, aged 15 to 64 years, Canada, 2010**




* significantly different than persons without disabilities ($p<0.05$)
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

This pattern was less marked among seniors (65 years or older). The median total income of seniors with mild disabilities was $23,000; the medians were $21,770 among those with moderate disabilities, and $22,010 and $19,440 among those with severe and very severe disabilities, respectively.

## A third rely on non-employment income

At ages 15 to 64 years, 31% of persons with disabilities reported receiving only employment income, and a slightly higher percentage, 37%, received only non-employment income, such as pensions, lump-sum payments, or investment income. About 20% of persons with disabilities received both employment and non-employment income, and 12% reported no income in 2011.

Among seniors (65 years or older) with disabilities, 80% reported receiving only non-employment income. The percentage reporting both employment and non-employment income was 8%, and the percentage reporting no income in 2011 was 11%.

A finer breakdown of income sources of persons with disabilities, by age group, is shown in Table 7. At ages 15 to 64 years, less than half (45%) reported income from wages and salaries, 41% reported receiving CPP disability benefits, and 15% provincial/territorial/municipal social assistance. At ages 65 years or older, 6% reported income from wages and salaries, 84% reported CPP disability benefits, and 2% reported receiving provincial/territorial/municipal social assistance.

Table 7
**Sources of personal income, by age group, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2011**

| Sources of personal income | Age group | |
|---|---|---|
| | 15 to 64 years | 65 years or older |
| | percent | |
| **Wages/salaries** | **45.1** | **5.7** |
| Self-employment | 12.6 | 5.3 |
| Workers' compensation | 7.9 | 3.2 |
| Canada Pension Plan (CPP) disability benefit | 16.5 | ... |
| Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) disability benefit | 2.5 | ... |
| Benefits from CPP excluding disability | 40.7 | 84.0 |
| Benefits from QPP excluding disability | 8.2 | 16.6 |
| Long term disability (private plan) | 10.3 | 2.9 |
| Motor vehicle accident insurance/disability | 1.8 | 0.5 |
| Veterans Affairs disability pension benefit | 0.9 | 4.4 |
| Provincial/Territorial /Municipal social assistance | 14.6 | 2.3 |
| Employment Insurance/QC parental insurance | 8.1 | 0.5 |

... not applicable
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

# 6. Aids, Assistive Devices and Medications

## More than 80% use at least one aid or assistive device

Specialized aids and devices often can assist persons with disabilities to perform their routine activities and increase their social participation. More than 80% of persons with disabilities reported using at least one aid or assistive device; 27% indicated that they needed at least one aid that they did not have.

Women (83%) were slightly more likely than men (80%) to report using at least one aid or assistive device, and a higher percentage of women (29%) than men (26%) indicated that they needed at least one aid that they did not have.

The use of aids or assistive devices increased with age. About 60% of 15- to 24-year-olds with disabilities reported using at least one aid or assistive device; at ages 65 to 74 years, the percentage was 85%, and at age 75 years or older, 90%.

The prevalence of unmet needs for aids peaked at around 30% among 45- to 64-year-olds and 65- to 74-year-olds with disabilities. At younger and older ages, the figure was about 25%.

## Use of aids or assistive devices increases with severity of disability

The use of at least one aid or assistive device generally increased with the severity of the disability. Two-thirds of persons with mild disabilities, 80% of those with moderate disabilities, 89% of those with severe disabilities, and 95% of those with very severe disabilities reported using at least one aid or assistive device.

The prevalence of unmet needs for aids also increased with the severity of the disability. While 15% of persons with mild disabilities reported needing an aid that they did not have, the figure was 44% among those with very severe disabilities. Regardless of the type of aid required, cost was the most commonly cited reason for unmet needs.

## Three-quarters reported taking prescription medication at least once a week

Three-quarters (76%) of persons with disabilities reported taking a prescription medication at least once a week. About 10% of persons with disabilities reported that they were unable to purchase prescription medications in the past 12 months because of the cost, and 10% indicated that, because of the cost, they took their medication less often than prescribed.

# 7. Help Received and Needed

## Help with heavy household chores most common

Help with heavy household chores, getting to appointments or running errands, and doing everyday housework were the most commonly reported types of assistance received by persons with disabilities (Table 8). Overall, 49% of persons with disabilities reported having received help with heavy household chores, but the percentage varied with the severity of the disability, rising from 34% among those with mild disabilities to 67% among those with very severe disabilities.

Table 8
**Most common help received, by global severity class, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2012**

| | Global severity class | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Help received | Total | Mild | Moderate | Severe | Very severe |
| | percent | | | | |
| Heavy household chores | 49.1 | 33.9 | 40.6 | 57.7 | 66.7 |
| Getting to appointments/running errands | 36.7 | 17.0 | 26.3 | 44.4 | 61.9 |
| Everyday housework | 35.2 | 17.1 | 26.5 | 42.6 | 57.6 |

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Unmet needs rise with severity of disability

A substantial percentage of persons with disabilities reported unmet needs for help (Table 9). Overall, 10% of persons with disabilities needed help with heavy household chores but did not receive it, and another 20% did not receive enough help. The corresponding percentages for getting to appointments/running errands were 5% and 14%, and for everyday housework, 10% and 12%.

The prevalence of receiving help increased with disability severity, but so did the prevalence of needing but not receiving help. Half (49%) of persons with severe disabilities either needed help or did not receive enough help with heavy household chores; the percentage for getting to appointments/running errands was 36%, and for everyday housework, 42%.

Table 9
**Unmet needs for selected types of help, by global severity class, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2012**

| | Global severity class | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Help received | Total | Mild | Moderate | Severe | Very severe |
| | percent | | | | |
| **Heavy household chores** | | | | | |
| Does not need help | 41.0 | 57.6 | 50.7 | 33.1 | 20.0 |
| Receives enough help | 29.2 | 25.0 | 25.7 | 35.6 | 31.4 |
| Needs help but does not receive it | 9.9 | 8.5 | 8.8 | 9.2 | 13.1 |
| Does not receive enough help | 19.9 | 9.0 | 14.8 | 22.1 | 35.5 |
| **"Getting to appointments/ running errands"** | | | | | |
| Does not need help | 58.8 | 80.1 | 69.4 | 51.8 | 30.8 |
| Receives enough help | 23.1 | 12.6 | 19.2 | 27.0 | 35.4 |
| Needs help but does not receive it | 4.6 | 3.0[E] | 4.2[E] | 3.9 | 7.3 |
| Does not receive enough help | 13.5 | 4.3 | 7.2 | 17.3 | 26.5 |
| **Everyday housework** | | | | | |
| Does not need help | 55.2 | 77.3 | 66.3 | 47.6 | 26.2 |
| Receives enough help | 22.9 | 14.4 | 19.2 | 29.1 | 30.6 |
| Needs help but does not receive it | 9.7 | 5.6 | 7.4 | 9.9 | 16.3 |
| Does not receive enough help | 12.2 | 2.6 | 7.1[E] | 13.4 | 26.9 |

[E] use with caution
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

## Family most common source of help

About 80% of persons with disabilities who did not live alone reported receiving help with everyday activities from family in the same household, and 37% reported receiving help from family not living with them. A quarter (24%) indicated that they received help from a friend or neighbour, and 17% reported receiving help from a paid organization or individual.

Among persons with disabilities who lived alone, 56% reported receiving help with everyday activities from family, and 35% received help from a friend or neighbour. A third (35%) reported receiving help from a paid organization or individual, and 22% reported receiving unpaid help from an organization or individual.

# 8. Public and Specialized Transit

## One-fifth regularly use public transit

Among persons with disabilities, 20% reported regular use of public transit, such as a bus or subway, and 8% regularly used a specialized transit service, such as a special bus or van of a subsidized accessible taxi service.

## Majority[10] have no difficulty using public or specialized transit

Three-quarters (74%) of persons with disabilities[10] reported no difficulty using public transit and/or specialized transit services; 13% had some difficulty, and 13% experienced "a lot" of difficulty. Common difficulties included getting on/off vehicle (48%), overcrowding (30%), and getting to or locating bus stops (29%).

Although the majority of persons with disabilities[10] reported no difficulty using public or specialized transit, the prevalence of difficulty increased with the severity of the disability (Table 10). For example, 3%[E] of persons with mild disabilities reported "a lot" of difficulty using public or specialized transit, but this was the case for 29% of those with very severe disabilities.

Table 10
**Difficulty using public or specialized transit, by global severity class, aged 15 years or older with disabilities, Canada, 2012**

| | Global severity class | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of difficulty | Total | Mild | Moderate | Severe | Very severe |
| | percent | | | | |
| No difficulty | 74.0 | 90.3 | 83.3 | 67.9 | 51.7 |
| Some difficulty | 13.4 | 6.7 | 12.3 | 17.1 | 19.4 |
| A lot of difficulty | 12.6 | 3.0[E] | 4.4 | 14.9 | 28.9 |

[E] use with caution
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, 2012.

# Conclusion

This report provides a wide array of information from the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. An estimated 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 years or older reported having a disability, which is consistent with the United Nation's estimate of 15% of the world's population living with some form of disability (United Nations Enable, n.d.).[11] Efforts are being made to improve the well-being of persons with disabilities and increase their opportunities to participate in economic and social life. Nonetheless, the findings of this report highlight potential challenges to the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities.

10. Excludes persons with disabilities who reported not using public or specialized transit services regularly or that public or specialized transit services were not available in their city or local community.
11. The two estimates are not directly comparable because of differences in information bases.

## More Information:

More information about the Canadian Survey on Disability is available at: www.statcan.gc.ca/csd

For a comparative analysis of the employment of persons with and without disabilities, see Turcotte (2014).

For analyses of caregiving by family and friends, see Sinha (2013) and Turcotte (2013).

For a detailed analysis of mental health-related disabilities, see Bizier, Marshall, & Fawcett (2014).

For a detailed analysis of learning disabilities, see Bizier, Till, & Nicholls (2014).

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# APPENDIX

## 1. Definition of disability

### Change from 2006 definition of disability

The definition of disability in the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) differs from that in the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS; SASD, 2013). The CSD uses a set of disability screening questions[12] (DSQ) that incorporate a more complete social model of disability. For example, respondents who indicate that they have some type of impairment and some difficulty with certain tasks, but that they are not limited in their daily activities, are not considered to have a disability in the CSD, although they would have been considered to have a disability in PALS, except for mental health-related, pain-related, and memory disabilities. Therefore, comparisons of the prevalence of disability between these two sources are not recommended (SASD, 2014b). More information about the differences in concepts between the 2006 PALS and 2012 CSD is available in CSD, 2012: *Concepts and Methods Guide* (SASD, 2014a).

### Changes from 2006 methodology

The CSD implemented some methodological changes from the earlier surveys. In 2011, questions that had previously been asked in the Census long-form, which was mandatory, became part of the National Household Survey (NHS), which was voluntary. The time-lag between the NHS and CSD follow-up (16 to 20 months) was longer than the time-lag between the Census and PALS (6 to 9 months). This required a different method for calibration of CSD weights, to account for the possibility that participants had been institutionalized or had died during the elapsed time, which was not done in the 2006 PALS (Statistics Canada, 2013). When the prevalence of disability is calculated or the characteristics of persons with disabilities are compared with those of persons without disabilities, the reference date is May 10, 2011. However, if only data on persons with disabilities are of interest, with no comparisons to those without disabilities, the reference period is the fall of 2012 (September 24 to January 13). The CSD, 2012: *Concepts and Methods Guide* (SASD, 2014a) contains more information about these methodological changes. Another change is that the content of the CSD was updated and streamlined to reflect advances in technology and to fine-tune wording. Owing to these methodological changes, comparisons should not be made between PALS and CSD data.

12. The CSD, 2012: Concepts and Methods Guide (SASD, 2014b) contains a detailed description of the DSQ.